

CALL FOR PROPOSALS – EAC/26/2009

Evidence-based policy and practice: call for proposals to develop networks of knowledge brokerage initiatives

1. BACKGROUND

The Commission's 2006 Communication *Efficiency and Equity in European Education and Training systems*¹ highlighted that effective long-term policies must be based on solid evidence. For this purpose, channels for producing, accessing and disseminating research among policy-makers and practitioners are necessary. In 2007, the Commission Staff Working Document "Towards more knowledge-based policy and practice in education and training"² stressed the need to develop further initiatives throughout Europe with the aim of producing coherent arrangements for the accumulation, mediation and application of educational research.

Developing evidence-based policy and practice is one of the immediate priorities of the *Updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training* beyond 2010, adopted in December 2008³, and of the annual work programme of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture. In addition, the *New Skills for New Jobs*⁴ initiative should encourage the responsiveness of education and training systems to the labour market skills needs identified by research, foresight and forecasting analysis.

This Call for Proposals will support international cooperation in the development of "knowledge brokerage" mechanisms. These mechanisms are intended to strengthen the links between research, policy and practice. Their main role is to make the results of research understandable and accessible and to bring research to the attention of policy and decision-makers and practitioners.

2. OBJECTIVES and THEMES

2.1.Objectives :

The objectives and the expected results of the Call include:

- Exchanging experience and good practice on the development of brokerage mechanisms
- Joint testing of innovative knowledge brokerage initiatives
- Development of a coherent infrastructure
- Development of a framework for assessing research quality and for formulating policy and practical recommendations based on sound evidence
- Creation and dissemination of concrete tools to share and disseminate knowledge (website, leaflets, video-based products, books, conferences, seminars)

2.2.Themes and priorities

¹ COM (2006) 481 final

² SEC(2007)1098

³ COM (2008) 865

⁴ COM (2008) 868

The themes addressed should be relevant to education and training policies and practices. In this field, policy-makers include Ministries of education, regions and local communities. Practitioners include teachers, learners, and training providers. The dissemination of research among stakeholders (social partners, civil society) is also relevant.

All contexts (formal, non formal) and levels of lifelong learning (pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary, adult, continuing) can be addressed. Research on labour market skills needs is also relevant for education and training systems.

Applicants are encouraged to take into account the challenges and priorities identified in the Communication on the "Updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training", but other relevant themes are also welcome. Taking on board research on labour market skills needs in the planning and delivering of education and training provision is also part of the "New Skills for New Jobs" initiative.

3. TIMETABLE

Applications must be dispatched no later than 29 September 2009.

The intention is to inform applicants of the outcome of the selection procedure in November 2009.

It is planned that beneficiaries will receive their agreements for signing in December 2009.

The period of eligibility of costs will start on the day the contract is signed by the last of the parties. If a beneficiary can demonstrate the need to start the action before the agreement is signed, expenditure may be authorised before the grant is awarded. Under no circumstances can the eligibility period start before the date of submission of the grant application.

Activities would start between December 2009 and February 2010.

The maximum duration of projects is 12 months.

However, if after the signing of the agreement and the start of the project it becomes impossible for the beneficiary, for fully justified reasons beyond his control, to complete the project within the scheduled period, an extension to the eligibility period may be granted. A maximum extension of 3 additional months will be granted, if requested before the deadline specified in the agreement. The maximum duration will then be 15 months.

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE

The total budget earmarked for the co-financing of projects would amount to 500 000 Euros.

Financial contribution from the Commission cannot exceed 75 % of the total costs.

The Commission envisages to select several projects and to give around 165 000 Euros to each one. However, the Commission reserves the right to change this distribution according to the quantity and quality of applicants.

The Commission reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available.

5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applications which comply with the following criteria will be the subject of an in-depth evaluation.

5.1 Eligible establishments/bodies/types of beneficiary

The following call is opened to :

- Ministries of education
- Other public bodies
- Research centres and Universities
- Foundations
- Associations

Applications must be submitted by a legal person. Applicants must submit a copy of the applicant organisation's articles of association and official certificate of legal registration.

Applicants must submit letters from partner organisations confirming their participation (original signatures required). Only proposals submitted by partnerships of at least 6 organisations from 6 different eligible countries will be considered. Partnerships with organisation from non-eligible countries are authorised, but the related costs will not be covered.

5.1.1 Legal Entity

In order to demonstrate its existence as a legal person, the applicant must provide the following documents:

Private company, association, etc.:

- bank details form, duly completed and signed,
- extract from the official gazette/trade register, and, if applicable, certificate of liability to VAT (if, as in certain countries, the trade register number and VAT number are identical, only one of these documents is required).

Public-law entity:

- bank details form, duly completed and signed,
- legal resolution or decision established in respect of the public company, or other official document established for the public-law entity.
- certificate of liability to VAT, if any

5.2 Eligible countries

Applications from legal entities established in one of the following countries are eligible:

- EU Member States
- EFTA countries which are members of EEA: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway
- candidate countries: Turkey

5.3 Eligible activities

The activities to be financed under this part of the call include:

- cooperation projects, exchanges, mobilities;
- actions aiming at the creation and improving of networks;
- development, testing and transfer of innovative practices
- conferences, seminars;
- awareness and dissemination actions;
- studies, analysis;
- creation and dissemination of concrete tools to share and diffuse knowledge (website, leaflets, video-based products, books, conferences, seminars)

5.4 Eligible proposals

Only proposals submitted using the official application form, completed in full, signed (original signatures required) and received by the specified deadline, will be considered.

The application form must be accompanied by an official letter from the applicant organisation, documents attesting to its financial and operational capacity, and all the other documents referred to in the application form.

Applicants must submit a budget that is balanced in terms of expenditure and revenue and must comply with the ceiling for Community cofinancing, set at 75% of total costs.

6. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Applicants must state that they are not in any of the situations described in Articles 93(1), 94 and 96(2)(a) of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities (Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 as amended) and set out below.

Applicants will be excluded from participating in the call for proposals if they are in any of the following situations:

- a) they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- b) they have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment which has the force of *res judicata*;

- c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify;
- d) they have not fulfilled obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the contracting authority or those of the country where the contract is to be performed;
- e) they have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of *res judicata* for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity detrimental to the Communities' financial interests;
- f) they are subject to an administrative penalty referred to in Article 96(1) of the Financial Regulation (Council Regulation 1605/2002 of 25/06/02, as amended).

Applicants will not be granted financial assistance if, on the date of the grant award procedure, they:

- (a) are subject to a conflict of interests;
- (b) are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the contracting authority as a condition of participation in the grant award procedure, or fail to supply this information;
- (c) find themselves in one of the situations of exclusion, referred to in art 93(1) of the Financial Regulation, for this grant award procedure;

and they are subject to the penalty consisting in the exclusion from contracts and grants financed by the budget for a maximum period of ten years.

In accordance with Articles from 93 to 96 of the Financial Regulation, administrative and financial penalties may be imposed on applicants who are guilty of misrepresentation or are found to have seriously failed to meet their contractual obligations under a previous contract award procedure.

To comply with these provisions, applicants must sign a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in any of the situations referred to in Articles 93(1) and 94 of the Financial Regulation.

7. SELECTION CRITERIA

The selection criteria shall be such as to make it possible to assess the applicant's ability to complete the proposed action or work programme.

Applicant must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out or the year for which the grant is awarded and to participate in its funding. They must have the professional competencies and qualifications required to complete the proposed action or work programme.

Applicants must submit a declaration on their honour, completed and signed, attesting to their status as a legal person and to their financial and operational capacity to complete the proposed activities. However, for grants exceeding 25.000 euros, supporting documents indicated in points 7.1 and 7.2 are requested.

7.1 Operational capacity

In order to permit an assessment of their operational capacity, organisations must submit, together with their applications:

- the CVs of the persons responsible within each partner institution showing all their relevant professional experience;

7.2 Financial capacity

In order to permit an assessment of their financial capacity, organisations must submit, together with their applications:

- the profit and loss accounts of the applicant organisation, together with the balance sheet for the last one financial year for which the accounts have been closed. If this is not possible, any other document attesting the financial capacity is required;
- the bank details form completed by the beneficiary and certified by the bank (original signatures required).

The verification of financial capacity shall not apply to natural persons in receipt of scholarships nor to public bodies, or to international organisations under public law.

NB: If, on the basis of the documents submitted, the Commission considers that financial capacity has not been proved or is not satisfactory, it may:

- reject the application
- ask for further information
- require a guarantee (see 10.3)
- offer a grant agreement without prefinancing.
- ask for an external audit

8. **AWARD CRITERIA**

- Relevance of the activities in relation to the objectives of the call (to bridge gaps between policy-makers, practitioners, researchers, to disseminate and make understandable research results, to bring research to the attention of policy-makers)
- Creativity of the concrete mediation tools proposed
- Quality of the methodology for accumulating evidence (interdisciplinary evidence, framework for choosing sound evidence)
- Implications of a wide range of stakeholders at all levels, including researchers, policy and decision makers, practitioners, training providers
- Potential results and consequences on policy and practice: the extent to which the activities will be fed back up to European, national, regional or local policy makers and practitioners
- Clarity and consistency of the practical approach, the proposed work-plan; clarity and coherence of the proposed budget

Each of these criteria has the same weight for the purposes of assessment.

9. EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS AND AWARD

A committee shall be appointed in order to evaluate the proposals.
Outside experts may assist the committee.

10. FINANCIAL CONDITIONS

Acceptance of an application by the Commission does not constitute an undertaking to award a financial contribution equal to the amount requested by the beneficiary. The awarding of a grant does not establish an entitlement for subsequent years.

Community grants are incentives to carry out projects which would not be feasible without the Commission's financial support, and are based on the principle of co-financing. They complement the applicant's own financial contribution and/or national, regional or private assistance that has been obtained elsewhere.

The allocated amount may not exceed the amount requested.

Grant applications must include a detailed estimated budget in which all prices are given in euro. Applicants from countries outside the euro zone must use the conversion rates published in the Official Journal of the European Union, series C, on the date of publication of this call for proposals.

The budget for the action attached to the application must have revenue and expenditure in balance *and show clearly the costs which are eligible for financing from the Community budget.*

The applicant must indicate the sources and amounts of any other funding received or applied for in the same financial year for the same action or for any other action and for routine activities.

The beneficiary shall supply evidence of the co-financing provided, either by way of own resources, or in the form of financial transfers from third parties. The applicants shall provide an explicit undertaking from each co-financing organisation to provide the amount of funding stated in the grant application for the operation.

The Commission grant may not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit for the beneficiary. Profit is defined as a surplus of receipts over costs. The amount of the grant will be reduced by the amount of any surplus.

The account or sub-account indicated by the beneficiary must make it possible to identify the funds transferred by the Commission. If the funds paid into this account give rise to interest or equivalent profits in accordance with the legislation of the country where the account is held, such profit or interest will be recovered by the Commission where it results from the prefinancing payment.

10.1 Payment procedures

In the event of definitive approval by the Commission, a financial agreement, drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be entered into between the Commission and the beneficiary. This agreement (the original) must be signed and returned to the Commission immediately. The Commission will sign it last. A pre-financing payment of

75% will be transferred to the beneficiary within 45 days of the date when the last of the two parties signs the agreement and all the possible guarantees are received. Pre-financing is intended to provide the beneficiary with a float.

The Commission will establish the amount of the final payment to be made to the beneficiary on the basis of the final reports. If the eligible costs actually incurred by the organisation during the project are lower than anticipated, the Commission will apply its rate of funding to the actual costs, and the beneficiary will, where applicable, be required to repay any excess amounts already transferred by the Commission under the pre-financing payments.

10.2 Certificate on the financial statements and underlying accounts

A certificate on the financial statements and underlying accounts, produced by an approved auditor or in case of public bodies, by a competent and independent public officer, may be requested in support of any payment on the basis of his assessment of risks. In the case of a grant for an action or of an operating grant, the certificate shall be attached to the request for payment. The certificate shall certify, in accordance with a methodology approved by the contracting authority, that the costs declared by the beneficiary in the financial statements on which the request for payment is based are real, accurately recorded and eligible in accordance with the grant agreement. Except in the case of lump sums and flat rate financing, the certificate on the financial statements and underlying accounts shall be compulsory for interim payments per financial year and for payments of balances in cases of grants for an action of EUR 750.000 or more, when the cumulative amounts of request for payment is at least EUR 325.000, and operating grants of EUR 100.000 or more.

10.3 Guarantee

The Commission may require any organisation which has been awarded a grant to provide a guarantee first, in order to limit the financial risks linked to the prefinancing payment.

The purpose of this guarantee is to make a bank or a financial institution, third party or the other beneficiaries stand as irrevocable collateral security for, or first-call guarantor of, the grant beneficiary's obligations.

This financial guarantee, in euro, shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the Member State of the European Union. When the beneficiary is established in a third country, the contracting authority may agree that a bank or financial institution established in that third country may provide the guarantee if he considers that the bank or financial institution offers equivalent security and characteristics as those offered by a bank or financial institution established in a Member State.

The guarantee may be replaced by a joint and several guarantee by a third party or by a joint guarantee of the beneficiaries of an action who are parties to the same grant agreement.

The guarantee shall be released as the pre-financing is gradually cleared against interim payments or payments of balances to the beneficiary, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement.

10.4 Double financing

Subsidised projects may not benefit from any other Community funding for the same activity.

10.5 Eligible costs

Eligible costs of the action/project are costs actually incurred by the beneficiary, which meet the following criteria:

- they are incurred during the duration of the action/project as specified in the grant agreement, with the exception of costs relating to final reports and certificates on the action/project's financial statements and underlying accounts;
- they are connected with the subject of the agreement and they are indicated in the estimated overall budget of the action/project;
- they are necessary for the implementation of the action/project which is the subject of the grant;
- they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the usual cost-accounting practices of the beneficiary;
- they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- they are reasonable, justified, and comply with the requirements of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

The beneficiary's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the costs and revenue declared in respect of the action/project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

Eligible direct costs:

The eligible direct costs for the action/project are those costs which, with due regard for the conditions of eligibility set out above, are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the action and which can therefore be booked to it directly. In particular, the following direct costs are eligible, provided that they satisfy the criteria set out in the previous paragraph:

- the cost of staff assigned to the action/project, comprising actual salaries plus social security charges and other statutory costs included in their remuneration, provided that this cost does not exceed the average rates corresponding to the usual remuneration policy of the beneficiary or, where applicable, its partners. NB: this cost must be actual cost incurred by the beneficiary and staff cost of other organisations is eligible only if it is paid directly or reimbursed by the beneficiary;

The corresponding salary costs of personnel of national administrations are eligible to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned were not undertaken;

- subsistence allowances for staff taking part in the action/project (for meetings, European conferences, etc.) provided that they do not exceed the scales approved annually by the Commission;

- travel allowances for staff taking part in the action/project (for meetings, European conferences, etc.), provided that they are reasonable, justified, and that they comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency;

- purchase cost of equipment (new or second-hand), provided that it is written off in accordance with the tax and accounting rules applicable to the beneficiary and generally accepted for items of the same kind. Only the portion of the equipment's depreciation corresponding to the duration of the action/project and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the action may be taken into account by the Commission, except where the nature and/or the context of its use justifies different treatment by the Commission;

- costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the action/project;

- costs entailed by other contracts awarded by the beneficiary or its partners for the purposes of carrying out the action/project, provided that the conditions laid down in the grant agreement are met;

- costs arising directly from requirements linked to the performance of the action/project (dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the action/project, audits, translations, reproduction, etc.), including, where applicable, the costs of any financial services (especially the cost of financial guarantees).

Eligible indirect costs (administrative costs);

- a flat-rate amount, not exceeding 7% of the eligible direct costs of the action, is eligible under indirect costs, representing the beneficiary's general administrative costs which can be regarded as chargeable to the action/project.

Indirect costs may not include costs entered under another budget heading.

Indirect costs are not eligible where the beneficiary already receives an operating grant.

This does not apply in the event of an operating grant.

10.6 Ineligible costs

The following costs shall not be considered eligible:

- return on capital;
- debt and debt service charges;
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- interest owed;
- doubtful debts;
- exchange losses;
- VAT, unless the beneficiary can show that he is unable to recover it according to the applicable national legislation;
- costs declared by the beneficiary and covered by another action or work programme receiving a Community grant;
- excessive or reckless expenditure.

Contributions in kind shall not constitute eligible costs.

11. SUB-CONTRACTING AND AWARD OF PROCUREMENT CONTRACT

Where implementation of the action/project requires sub-contracting or the awarding of a procurement contract, the beneficiary and, where applicable, its partners must obtain competitive tenders from potential contractors and award the contract to the bid offering best value for money, observing the principles of transparency and equal treatment of potential contractors and taking care to avoid conflicts of interests.

Where implementation of the assisted actions requires the award of a procurement contract with a value of more than EUR 60 000, the authorising officer responsible may require beneficiaries to abide by special rules. Those special rules shall be based on rules contained in the Financial Regulation and determined with due regard for the value of the contracts concerned, the relative size of the Community contribution in relation to the total cost of the action and the risk. Such special rules shall be included in the grant decision or agreement.

The beneficiary must clearly document the tendering procedure and retain the documentation for the event of an audit.

12. PUBLICITY

All grants awarded in the course of a financial year must be published on the Internet site of the Community institutions during the first half of the year following the closure of the budget year in respect of which they were awarded. The information may also be published using any other appropriate medium, including the Official Journal of the European Union.

With the agreement of the beneficiary (taking account of whether information is of such a nature as to jeopardise its security or prejudice its financial interests), the Commission will publish the following information:

- name and address of the beneficiary,

- subject of the grant,
- amount awarded and rate of funding.

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union's contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the grant is used.

Furthermore, beneficiaries are required to give prominence to the name and logo of the European Commission on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products realised under the co-financed project. To do this they must use the logo that will be provided by the Commission. If this requirement is not fully complied with, the beneficiary's grant may be reduced.

13. DATA PROTECTION

All personal data (such as names, addresses, CVs, etc.) will be processed in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data.

Your replies to the questions in the application form are necessary in order to assess your grant application and they will be processed solely for that purpose by the department responsible for the Community grant programme concerned. On request, you may be sent personal data and correct or complete them. For any question relating to these data, please contact the Commission department to which the application must be returned. Beneficiaries may lodge a complaint against the processing of their personal data with the European Data Protection Supervisor at any time.

14. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

14.1 Publication

The call for proposals is being published in the Official Journal of the European Union and on the Internet site of the Education and Culture DG at the following address:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/calls/grants_en.html

14.2 Application form

Grant applications must be drawn up in one of the official EU languages, using the form specifically designed for this purpose. Please note that only typed applications will be considered.

The forms can be obtained on the Internet at the following address:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/calls/grants_en.html

14.3 Submission of the grant application

Only applications submitted not later than 29 September 2009, on the correct form, duly completed, dated, showing a balanced budget (revenue/expenditure), submitted in triplicate (one original clearly identified as such, plus 2 certified copies), and signed by the person authorised to enter into legally binding commitments on behalf of the applicant organisation will be accepted.

Applications which are not submitted before the deadline will not be considered.

Applications must be sent to the following address:

“Call for proposals EAC/26/2009”

Gordon CLARK

Head of unit

Lifelong learning: contribution to the Lisbon process (A.1)

DG Education and Culture

MADO 9/14

B-1049 Brussels

Applications must be submitted in a sealed envelope itself enclosed within a second sealed envelope addressed as indicated above. The inner envelope must bear, in addition to the address above, the words, “Call for proposal EAC/26/2009 – Not to be opened by the mail service.” If self-adhesive envelopes are used, they must be sealed with adhesive tape and the sender must sign across that tape.

No changes to the dossier can be made after the application has been submitted. However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects, the Commission may contact the applicant for this purpose.

Applicants will be informed of the receipt of their proposal within 10 working days.

Only applications that fulfil the eligibility criteria will be considered for a grant. If an application is deemed ineligible, a letter indicating the reasons will be sent to the applicant.

All unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing.

Selected proposals will be subjected to a financial analysis, in connection with which the Commission may ask the persons responsible for the proposed actions to provide additional information and, if appropriate, guarantees.

14.4 Rules applicable

Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities, as amended;

Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002 (rules for the implementation of the Council Regulation) as amended;

Decision n° 1720/2006/CE of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning.

14.5 Contacts

Contact between the Commission and the applicants is forbidden, save, exceptionally, in cases where clarification of the call for proposals dossier is

necessary. Should the applicant require any clarification prior to the deadline for submission of applications, the request should be addressed to: EAC-CALL-EBPP@EC.EUROPA.EU

Requests for clarifications received at least 15 days before the deadline for submission of applications, will be answered not later than 10 days before the deadline. Requests received 14 days or fewer before the deadline will not be answered. Responses which provide additional information to the call for proposals dossier will be available to all applicants on the website.